

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

020941Z May 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 002719

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

-----  
SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
-----

- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Syrian-Lebanese Track
- [3](#). Visit of Turkish PM Erdogan to Israel, May 1-2

-----  
Key stories in the media:  
-----

Israel Radio reported that an IDF soldier was killed and another was wounded in an operation near Tulkarm, in which a senior Islamic Jihad activist was also killed. Israel Radio reported that a mortar shell was launched at a northern Gaza Strip settlement last night. Leading media reported that on Sunday, the IDF raided a house in Tulkarm and arrested Mohammed Shalhoub, a suspected suicide bomber -- the first such arrest since Israel transferred the city's security to the PA five weeks ago. Israel Radio reported that the police have arrested Shireen Tarazi, a 19-year-old female student from East Jerusalem, on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack. Maariv reported that at least 600 Kalashnikov rifles have been smuggled from Egypt into the West Bank during the past two weeks.

Ha'aretz reported that the GOI is likely to abandon the plan to relocate settler evacuees to the Nitzanim dunes near Ashdod and areas around Ashkelon. Maariv reported that the IDF has suggested that settlements to be evacuated in the northern West Bank be turned into camps for the Palestinian police.

During the weekend, the media highlighted the visit of Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Israel. Erdogan, who expressed his desire to play a role in the peace process and proposed setting up a Turkish-Palestinian working team to examine "how to combat terrorism, preserve the calm, and make peace," asked that Israel be patient and give PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas time to fulfill his security commitments. The media quoted PM Sharon as saying that Israel was interested in Turkish assistance in the economic development of the Gaza Strip after disengagement. Leading media reported that the two countries will set up a hotline in order to fight terrorism. On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Israel and Turkey would sign a new deal to upgrade about 30 F-4 Phantoms belonging to the Turkish air force, at a cost of USD 400-500 million.

On Sunday, all media reported that an Israeli couple was among nine people wounded in terrorist attacks in Cairo on Saturday.

Leading media reported that on Friday, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the disarming of Hizbullah.

Israel Radio reported that Diaspora and Jerusalem Affairs Minister Natan Sharansky tendered his resignation to PM Sharon this morning. In his resignation letter, Sharansky wrote: "We are drawing close to a terrible rift in the nation, and to my sorrow I see no effort on the government's part to prevent it." Sharansky says that Israel refuses to understand that the key to creating peace in the Middle East is by encouraging democracy in the region.

Leading media reported that settlers were arrested on

Friday following the wounding of a senior IDF officer in the West Bank.

Yediot reported that several weeks ago, the FBI questioned former senior Mossad official Uzi Arad in the U.S. about his ties with alleged "Pentagon mole" Larry Franklin, who has been suspected of passing information to Israel. The newspaper quoted Arad as saying he had been happy to assist the interrogators, but that he is not suspected in any wrongdoing.

All media (banner in Maariv) reported that on Sunday, outgoing IDF C-o-S Moshe Ya'alon again voiced veiled grievances against Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz.

In economic news, Yediot reported on Sunday that Israel is included on the USTR blacklist of the fourteen leading countries in the area of IPR violations. Israel was absent from this list in the past two years because of its promises to pass appropriate laws to protect copyrights. In an unrelated development, Israel Radio reported that two Israelis are suspected of defrauding the American pharmaceutical company Pfizer of USD 2 million.

All media reported that Stanley Fischer was sworn in on Sunday as Governor of the Bank of Israel by President Moshe Katsav.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz reported that Senate Majority leader Bill Frist arrived in Israel Sunday as part of a fact-finding tour of the Middle East. He will meet with Vice Premier Shimon Peres, Sharon, and Abbas.

Leading media reported that FM Silvan Shalom leaves today for his first visit to Mauritania, the only member of the Arab League in North Africa that has maintained diplomatic relations with Israel throughout the Intifada. Discussions will cover developing bilateral relations, promoting diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab countries, and the threat of Islamic fundamentalism.

Leading media reported that the government will today discuss upgrading the status of the Judea and Samaria College in Ariel (West Bank) and combining northern colleges into a Galilee university. Leading media quoted Education Minister Limor Livnat as saying: "Upgrading the colleges into universities is designed to support the settlement vision, out of the national interest of the State of Israel." Several media say that this was a reference to Britain's Association of University Teachers (AUT) boycott of two Israeli universities. The media quoted Construction and Housing Minister Yitzhak Herzog (Labor) as saying that establishing a university in a "problematic" area would "take away precious resources that do not meet Israel's priorities, first and foremost the development on the Negev and Galilee.

Ha'aretz quoted Sheikh Mouaffac Tarif, the leader of the Druze community in Israel, as saying that Peres and Lebanese Druze leader Walid Joumblatt have recently met in Paris. Ha'aretz quoted Likud MK Ayoub Kara as saying that Israel is active in Lebanon in efforts to allow the return of former South Lebanon Army fighters to their country, as part of the general conciliation moves in Lebanon. The newspaper reported that Kara is due to meet with U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer to advance the matter.

The media highlighted First Lady Laura Bush's humorous remarks at the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner on Saturday.

-----  
[1](#)1. Mideast:  
-----

Summary:  
-----

Senior op-ed writer Akiya Eldar opined in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "All [members of the Clinton peace team] agreed that if Bush prefers to concentrate on the democratization of the Middle East instead of restarting the peace process and helping Abu Mazen make real headway in the upcoming Palestinian elections, the President will end up with no peace and no democracy. And what about us?"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in Ha'aretz: "[As far as the Palestinians are concerned], without Jerusalem there is no Palestinian state and no solution."

Dr. Yoram Meital, Chair of Ben Gurion University's Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy, wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The relentless struggle against [Egypt's] extremist Islamic factions will continue to dominate the regime's agenda under the elected president."

Block Quotes:  
-----

I. "Learning From Past Mistakes"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar opined in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (May 2): "The self-criticism voiced by the four members of President Bill Clinton's peace talks team at last week's seminar organized by the Middle East Institute in Washington competed with their criticism of President George W. Bush's peace policy. Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk, Aaron Miller and Rob Malley took a large chunk of the responsibility for the collapse of the peace process on themselves. The majority of the mistakes and flaws that they pointed out are also true of the Bush administration today. Learning the lessons of the failure that ended in the outbreak of the second Intifada could perhaps, even now, prevent the third Intifada.... Miller reminded Bush of three Americans -- Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and James Baker -- who exhibited resoluteness toward Israel, but also secured its trust and actually produced agreements. All agreed that if Bush prefers to concentrate on the democratization of the Middle East instead of restarting the peace process and helping Abu Mazen make real headway in the upcoming Palestinian elections, the President will end up with no peace and no democracy. And what about us?"

II. "Eliminating Any Chance of a State"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in Ha'aretz (May 2): "From the Palestinians' point of view, expanding the Jewish hold on the eastern part of the city [of Jerusalem] and completing the separation wall means the perpetuation of the violent conflict. If the Israeli public agrees that recognizing the right of return means liquidating the Jewish state -- so it is universally acknowledged among the Palestinians that the 'Judaization of Jerusalem,' as they call it, means eliminating the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state. In other words, without Jerusalem there is no Palestinian state and no solution.... It could ... be said with a large degree of certainty that Mahmoud Abbas' leadership would be capable of coping with internal and external difficulties in the near future. However, it does not have much chance of surviving if Israel continues to establish 'facts on the ground' in East Jerusalem, which will leave no room for negotiations over the city's future."

III. "Egypt's Soft Belly"

Dr. Yoram Meital, Chair of Ben Gurion University's Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy, wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (May 2): "The extremists do not enjoy wide support among the Egyptian public. The terrorist attacks are severely condemned and criticized. However, neither does the regime enjoy much sympathy.... The relentless struggle against the extremist Islamic factions will continue to dominate the regime's agenda under the elected president."

-----  
2. Syrian-Lebanese Track:  
-----

Summary:  
-----

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "It would be ridiculous to claim that Syrian intelligence has gone with the military units."

Block Quotes:  
-----

"Syria's Still There"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (May 1): "The withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon is seen by Israel as a first and important step, but behind the scenes Damascus will continue to control

intelligence, including within the Lebanese army.... Israel does not believe that with the withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon, Syria has withdrawn entirely from a country it controlled in almost every vital sphere. It would be ridiculous to claim that Syrian intelligence has gone with the military units. Israel is convinced that Syrian intelligence will continue to exert control in Lebanon's pro-Syrian government. The Lebanese army is thoroughly infiltrated with Syrian intelligence, which gives financial aid to many Lebanese officers. And Syrian intelligence penetration of Hezbollah runs deep. Some of Hezbollah's rocket array is manufactured in Syria and came its way after the Syrian general staff decided to view Hezbollah as an organic part of its deployment of forces. Only truly free elections can bring about internal change, and for that Lebanon needs international observers. Only a free government could send the Lebanese army to take responsibility for security in the south of the country.... Israel's main concern is how to treat Hizbullah if it remains an armed militia that does not take orders from the Lebanese government. From Israel's point of view, there has been no real change in the array of enemy forces."

-----  
13. Visit of Turkish PM Erdogan to Israel, May 1-2:  
-----

Summary:  
-----

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "The fact that Erdogan decided to embark on a high-profile state-visit despite last year's bitterness is a testament to his desire not to yield to Arab pressure and not to make vehement anti-Israeli rhetoric his administration's calling card. This can only be regarded as a hopeful development."

Block Quotes:  
-----

"Erdogan's Well-Timed Visit"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (May 2): "Israeli-Turkish relations rest on a bedrock of solid mutual interests, which perhaps augurs well for future cooperation.... Israel offers a sophisticated research-industrial infrastructure in spheres ranging from the vanguard of hi-tech to agriculture, while Turkey -- the sole Muslim NATO member -- offers Israel its only strategic regional ally. Both already boast considerable cultural, academic and commercial connections. Both are also threatened by extremists. If there can be understanding, indeed symbiosis between two states, it's between Israel and Turkey. Turkey can become a beacon of progress, tolerance and enlightenment in a region that cries out for reform. It's a historic opportunity that mustn't be missed. The fact that Erdogan decided to embark on a high-profile state-visit despite last year's bitterness is a testament to his desire not to yield to Arab pressure and not to make vehement anti-Israeli rhetoric his administration's calling card. This can only be regarded as a hopeful development."

KURTZER